



The Effect of Social Media Use on English Proficiency of High School Students in Palembang

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect of social media usage on English proficiency among high school students in Palembang City. The increasing integration of digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram into students' daily lives presents both opportunities and challenges for language learning. This research employed a quantitative correlational design involving 120 high school students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires and English proficiency tests, and analyzed using Pearson correlation and regression analysis. The findings reveal a positive and significant relationship between social media usage and students' English proficiency, particularly in vocabulary acquisition, speaking confidence, and listening skills. However, excessive exposure to informal language and entertainment content may hinder grammatical accuracy. The study concludes that social media can serve as an effective supplementary learning tool when guided appropriately. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on digital learning and provide practical implications for educators in integrating social media into English language teaching.

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the educational landscape, particularly in the domain of language learning. In recent years, social media platforms have evolved beyond their initial function as communication tools and have become significant resources for informal and self-directed learning. High school students, as active digital users, increasingly rely on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook for both entertainment and educational purposes. This shift has created new opportunities for enhancing English language proficiency through exposure to authentic language use in real-world contexts. Abedi and Chhibber (2023) emphasize that social media platforms provide accessible and diverse English-language content that can support vocabulary development, listening comprehension, and communicative competence.

The integration of social media into language learning aligns with contemporary theories of digital learning, which highlight the importance of interactive and learner-centered environments. Social media

facilitates continuous exposure to English through videos, captions, comments, and real-time interactions, allowing learners to engage with the language beyond formal classroom settings. Islam (2022) argues that social media creates immersive learning environments that enable students to practice language skills in authentic contexts. This perspective is supported by Rabongue et al. (2024), who found that students benefit from incidental learning when engaging with English content on social networking platforms. Such exposure enables learners to acquire language naturally through repeated interaction with meaningful input.

In the Indonesian educational context, the role of social media in language learning has attracted increasing scholarly attention. Several studies indicate that social media contributes positively to various aspects of English proficiency. Nurhastuti et al. (2024) report that social media enhances language acquisition by providing authentic exposure and opportunities for contextual learning. Similarly, Syahira et al. (2024) demonstrate that frequent engagement with social media improves students' speaking skills, particularly in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and confidence. These findings suggest that social media can complement formal instruction by offering additional learning opportunities outside the classroom.

Despite these benefits, the use of social media in language learning is not without challenges. One major concern is the prevalence of informal and non-standard language forms, which may negatively influence students' formal language competence. Arisetya (2025) highlights that the widespread use of slang and informal expressions on social media can reduce students' ability to use formal language accurately. This issue is particularly relevant for high school students who are still developing their foundational language skills. In addition, Fadhilah (n.d.) points out that the presence of non-educational content on social media can distract students and limit the effectiveness of these platforms as learning tools.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of social media as a learning medium is influenced by several factors, including frequency of use, type of content, and level of learner engagement. Navida-Raya et al. (2024) found that increased exposure to social media is associated with improvements in English proficiency, although the correlation tends to be moderate. This indicates that while social media has potential benefits, its impact is not automatic and depends on how it is utilized by learners. Similarly, Litta and Sulviana (2025) emphasize that the quality of content and the learner's motivation play crucial roles in determining learning outcomes.

Previous research has also highlighted the role of social media in fostering motivation and engagement in language learning. Gumindari (2023) found that social media increases students' interest in learning English by providing interactive and engaging content. Malik et al. (2022) further argue that social networking platforms create a relaxed and supportive environment that encourages students to practice language skills without fear of making mistakes. This aspect is particularly important for developing speaking skills, as confidence is a key factor in language use.

However, most existing studies focus on specific aspects of language learning, such as speaking skills, motivation, or perceptions, rather than examining overall English proficiency. For example, Aprillia et al. (2024) investigated the use of TikTok videos to improve speaking ability, while Abror and Setiawan (2024) examined the relationship between social media use and learning motivation. Although these studies provide valuable insights, they do not offer a comprehensive analysis of how social media affects multiple dimensions of language proficiency simultaneously. This limitation indicates a gap in the literature that needs to be addressed.

In addition, research focusing specifically on high school students in Palembang remains limited. While some studies have been conducted in this context, they often emphasize isolated variables or specific educational outcomes. For instance, studies conducted in Palembang tend to focus on motivation

or specific language skills rather than overall proficiency. Mohamad et al. (2023) suggest that there is a need for more empirical research that examines the direct relationship between social media use and language proficiency using quantitative approaches. Such studies are essential for providing evidence-based recommendations for educators and policymakers.

Another important consideration is the dual nature of social media as both a learning resource and a potential source of distraction. On one hand, social media provides access to authentic materials, interactive communication, and opportunities for collaborative learning. On the other hand, excessive use of social media for entertainment purposes may reduce students' focus on learning activities. Usup and Purwaningsih (2024) argue that the effectiveness of social media in education depends on its integration into structured learning processes. Without proper guidance, students may not be able to fully utilize the educational potential of these platforms.

Given these considerations, there is a clear need for a comprehensive study that examines the effect of social media use on English proficiency among high school students, particularly in the context of Palembang City. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the relationship between social media usage and students' performance in various aspects of English language proficiency, including vocabulary, grammar, listening, and speaking skills. By focusing on a specific population and employing a quantitative approach, this study seeks to provide more robust and generalizable findings.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to both theoretical and practical aspects of language education. Theoretically, the study enriches the existing literature on digital learning and language acquisition by providing empirical evidence on the role of social media. Practically, the findings can inform teachers and educators about effective strategies for integrating social media into English language instruction. In addition, the study offers insights for policymakers in developing educational programs that leverage digital technology to enhance language learning outcomes.

In conclusion, while social media has been widely recognized as a valuable tool for language learning, its impact on English proficiency requires further investigation. The existing literature highlights both the opportunities and challenges associated with its use, indicating the need for a balanced and evidence-based approach. This study addresses this need by examining the effect of social media on the English proficiency of high school students in Palembang, with the aim of providing a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon and contributing to the improvement of language education practices.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between social media usage and English proficiency among high school students. The correlational approach was selected to identify the strength and direction of the association between variables without manipulating the research setting. This design allows for objective measurement of naturally occurring phenomena and is appropriate for investigating educational trends in real contexts.

Research Setting and Time

The research was conducted in several senior high schools in Palembang City, Indonesia. The selection of this location was based on the high level of social media usage among students and the relevance of digital learning practices in urban educational environments. Data collection was carried out over a three-month period from January to March 2026. This timeframe ensured sufficient opportunity for administering instruments and collecting reliable data.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all high school students in Palembang City. Due to practical limitations, a sample of 120 students was selected using purposive sampling techniques. The sampling criteria included students who actively use social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook for at least one hour per day. This criterion ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to social media to reflect its potential impact on language learning.

The selected sample represents a range of students with varying levels of English proficiency and social media engagement. This diversity supports the generalizability of the findings within the context of high school education in Palembang.

Research Instruments

Two primary instruments were used to collect data: a structured questionnaire and an English proficiency test.

The questionnaire was designed to measure students' social media usage, including frequency, duration, types of platforms used, and learning-related activities. The items were structured using a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire also included indicators related to engagement with English-language content, such as watching videos, reading captions, and interacting with online communities.

The English proficiency test was developed to assess four key language skills: vocabulary, grammar, listening, and speaking. The test consisted of multiple-choice items for vocabulary and grammar, listening comprehension tasks, and a short oral performance assessment for speaking. The test content was aligned with the high school English curriculum to ensure relevance and validity.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted in a structured and systematic manner. First, permission was obtained from school authorities to conduct the research. Participants were then briefed on the purpose of the study and provided informed consent.

The questionnaire was administered in a classroom setting to ensure consistency in responses. After completing the questionnaire, students participated in the English proficiency test under supervised conditions. The speaking component was assessed using a standardized rubric to maintain scoring consistency.

All data were collected anonymously to ensure confidentiality and to encourage honest responses from participants.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using statistical methods to determine the relationship between social media usage and English proficiency. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize students' responses, including mean scores and standard deviations.

Inferential analysis was conducted using Pearson correlation to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between variables. A significance level of 0.05 was applied to determine statistical significance. In addition, simple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the extent to which social media usage predicts English proficiency.

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software to ensure accuracy and reliability.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the quality of the research instruments, validity and reliability tests were conducted. Content validity was established through expert judgment, where the instruments were reviewed by

English education specialists. Construct validity was examined through item analysis to ensure that each item accurately measured the intended variable.

Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the questionnaire. The results indicated that all items met the acceptable reliability threshold, confirming the internal consistency of the instrument. The English proficiency test was also reviewed to ensure clarity, consistency, and alignment with learning objectives.

Results and Discussions

The analysis reveals a statistically significant relationship between social media usage and students' English proficiency. Based on Pearson correlation analysis, the correlation coefficient was $r = 0.41$ ($p < 0.05$), indicating a moderate positive relationship. This finding confirms that increased engagement with social media is associated with improved English language skills among high school students in Palembang.

Table 1. Correlation between Social Media Usage and English Proficiency

Variable	r-value	Sig. (p)	Interpretation
Social Media Usage – English Proficiency	0.41	0.000	Moderate Positive Correlation

The result aligns with Navida-Raya et al. (2024), who reported a positive correlation between social media exposure and English proficiency, although at a relatively low level. The stronger correlation in this study suggests that the intensity and type of social media usage among students in Palembang may contribute more significantly to language development.

Further analysis was conducted to examine students' performance across different language skills. The results indicate that vocabulary and listening skills show the highest improvement, followed by speaking skills, while grammar shows relatively lower performance.

Table 2. Mean Scores of English Proficiency by Skill Area

Skill Area	Mean Score	Category
Vocabulary	78.5	High
Listening	76.8	High
Speaking	74.2	Moderate
Grammar	69.4	Moderate

The data indicate that students benefit most from exposure to audio-visual content available on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. This finding is consistent with Abedi and Chhibber (2023), who emphasize that multimedia content enhances vocabulary acquisition and listening comprehension. Similarly, Litta and Sulviana (2025) argue that authentic content exposure improves learners' motivation and engagement.

The regression analysis shows that social media usage significantly predicts English proficiency. This indicates that social media functions as a contributing factor to language development, although it is not the sole determinant. The finding supports Islam (2022), who states that social media provides an interactive environment that facilitates language practice in authentic contexts.

In terms of speaking skills, students reported increased confidence when using English in online interactions. This result is supported by Syahira et al. (2024), who found that frequent engagement with social media improves pronunciation and fluency. Additionally, Malik et al. (2022) highlight that social

networking platforms create a low-anxiety environment that encourages students to practice language without fear of making mistakes.

However, the findings also reveal certain limitations. The relatively lower score in grammar indicates that students are less exposed to formal language structures. This supports Arisetya (2025), who argues that informal language use on social media can negatively affect formal language competence. Furthermore, Fadhilah (n.d.) notes that excessive exposure to entertainment content may reduce students' focus on structured learning.

Overall, the results demonstrate that social media has a dual impact on English language learning. On one hand, it enhances engagement, vocabulary acquisition, and communicative competence. On the other hand, it may hinder the development of formal language accuracy if not used appropriately. Usup and Purwaningsih (2024) emphasize that the effectiveness of social media depends on how it is integrated into structured learning environments.

These findings highlight the importance of guided use of social media in education. Teachers should not only encourage the use of digital platforms but also provide direction on selecting appropriate content and maintaining a balance between informal and formal language use. By doing so, the benefits of social media can be maximized while minimizing its potential drawbacks.

Conclusion

This study concludes that social media usage has a significant positive effect on the English proficiency of high school students in Palembang. The findings indicate that students who actively engage with social media platforms demonstrate better performance in vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and speaking confidence. The accessibility of authentic English content and the interactive nature of digital platforms contribute to increased exposure and practice opportunities, which support language development. These results are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the role of social media in facilitating informal and contextual language learning.

However, the study also identifies limitations related to the quality of language input. The relatively lower performance in grammar suggests that frequent exposure to informal language on social media may affect students' ability to use formal English accurately. In addition, the presence of non-educational content may reduce the effectiveness of social media as a learning tool if not properly managed.

Therefore, this study highlights the importance of integrating social media into structured learning environments. Teachers are encouraged to guide students in selecting appropriate content and using digital platforms for educational purposes. Future research is recommended to explore experimental approaches and long-term impacts of social media on language learning outcomes, particularly in different educational contexts.

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